

Member Handbook

Portsmouth Symphony Orchestra

This Handbook provides basic information for all members of the Portsmouth Symphony Orchestra. It is a reflection of the PSO's artistic philosophy. Fundamental to this philosophy is the belief that both artistic achievement and maintenance of collegial community within a performance ensemble are mutually supportive endeavors.

The success of the orchestra is every member's goal, therefore the Member Handbook/Guidelines is directed to all PSO members, paid and unpaid, so that all members are in shared alignment.

To that end, it is expected that all members of the orchestra be prepared to perform their parts to the standards set out in this Handbook. Orchestra-wide commitment is needed in order for the PSO to achieve its goals, as stated in the Mission Statement:

"The Portsmouth Symphony Orchestra is a community orchestra committed to contributing high quality symphonic music to the seacoast community. We are dedicated to entertaining, educating, and encouraging the audiences of today and tomorrow."

Through this, the orchestra can satisfy increasingly higher expectations of the current audience, earning their loyalty while at the same time attracting new audience members.

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The Portsmouth Symphony Orchestra is comprised of the following players:

- Strings: 12 first violins; 12 second violins; 10 violas; 10 cellos; 5 double basses;
- Winds: 3 flutes; 3 oboes; 3 clarinets; 3 bassoons;
- Brass: 4 horns; 3 trumpets; 3 trombones; 1 tuba;
- Percussion: 1 timpani; 4 percussion;

For works scored for a larger orchestra, additional players are engaged as needed from the supporting players list.

Four Levels of PSO Membership Defined

The four levels of membership are:

1. Principal (paid)
2. Regular Supporting Player (paid)
3. Regular Volunteer Player (unpaid)
4. Auxiliary Player (paid)

All levels of membership are expected to bring printed or electronic parts with markings to the first rehearsal. In most cases, all members are expected to provide their own materials (stand lights, instruments, pencils, etc) and may not be reimbursed for purchases or gas mileage. In some cases and with prior authorization of the Board President or the General

Manager, the PSO may cover expenses of instrument rentals/repairs or outreach music purchases.

All levels of membership are expected to follow the PSO's Code of Conduct and all other PSO policies and expectations. Failure to do so may result in suspension or termination from the orchestra.

1-Principal Position (Paid)

A Principal reports directly to the Music Director.

A Principal may be someone who is sitting in the Principal seat for an entire season, or someone who is sitting in the Principal seat for one or more concert cycles.

A Principal is responsible for their entire section and is expected to hold musicians in that section to the highest standards.

A Principal is expected to communicate with other Principals regarding the repertoire being rehearsed; is encouraged to nurture and mentor section players; and, by personal example, to encourage high artistic standards. If a Principal notices members of their section not performing to standard, it is their responsibility to discuss this with the musician and notify the Musician Coordinator.

A Principal is expected to perform at the highest technical and artistic level with flawless intonation; responsive musicality; dynamic nuance; rhythmic accuracy; and vigilant sensitivity to ensemble. She/he must be fully prepared at first rehearsal, and in full technical command of the repertoire to be rehearsed.

A Principal is expected to perform in that position for the entire concert season and attend all rehearsals. Exceptions must be requested with timely notice to the Music Director and will be granted at the discretion of the Music Director.

Principal Strings are responsible for coordinating bowings with the Concertmaster as needed, for marking and distributing bowings to their respective sections, and contacting the Music Director with any additional musical questions. All bowings should be clearly marked in the parts, divisi assigned, and other musical questions addressed no later than two weeks prior to the first rehearsal. Principal players will respond to questions from their section within a reasonable amount of time (three days).

A Principal's tenure is renewable at the discretion of the Music Director and repeated failure to meet any expectations laid out in this handbook will result in a meeting with the Music Director and Musician Coordinator and/or removal from the post.

Principal positions are paid per service at a rate determined by the PSO Board.

2-Regular Supporting Player (Paid)

Regular supporting players report to their Principal and are encouraged to make use of the Principal's expertise and experience.

Regular supporting players should study parts and scores well ahead of the first rehearsal of the cycle. Any questions concerning the music should be directed to the principal player of your section. Regular supporting players should not contact the music director outside of rehearsals with musical questions. Should you not receive a response from your principal within three days, please reach out to the Musician Coordinator.

Regular supporting players are expected to perform in their position for the majority of the concert season. The roster of regular supporting players will be reviewed at the end of each concert season based on performance.

Regular supporting players are paid per service at a rate determined by the PSO Board.

3-Regular Volunteer (Unpaid)

All regular volunteer musicians report to their Principal whose expertise and experience will be a significant resource. Volunteer musicians must be able to play with musicality and proficiency and be familiar with the rehearsal repertoire. By mid-point of the rehearsal cycle, volunteer musicians should be able to perform the repertoire at concert speed with prescribed bowings and fingerings.

Regular volunteer musicians should study parts and scores well ahead of the first rehearsal of the cycle. Any questions concerning the music should be directed to the principal player of your section. Regular volunteer musicians should not contact the music director outside of rehearsals with musical questions. Should you not receive a response from your Principal within three days, please reach out to the Musician Coordinator.

Volunteers are expected to perform in their position for the majority of the concert season.

4-Auxiliary Player (Paid)

As needed, the orchestra periodically requires the services of additional professional players.

Auxiliary players should study parts and scores well ahead of the first rehearsal of the cycle.

Any questions concerning the music should be directed to the principal player of your section.

Auxiliary players should not contact the music director outside of rehearsals with musical

questions. Should you not receive a response from your Principal within three days, please reach out to the Musician Coordinator.

These are paid positions of a temporary nature, and such individuals are not considered full PSO members.

Absences

The PSO recognizes that emergencies do occur from time to time, requiring absence on the part of a musician. In such cases, every effort should be made to inform the Musician Coordinator in as timely a fashion as possible. Musicians should do their best to minimize these situations. Those who must miss two or more rehearsals in a concert cycle will be removed from the cycle.

Leave of Absence

If circumstances require a Leave of Absence, the member must make a formal request in writing to the Board of Directors for approval. Leave of Absence is not to exceed one year unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the PSO Board. The vacated position will be filled temporarily with the understanding that the member is guaranteed a position in his/her section at the agreed upon return date.

Seating

All seating is ultimately at the discretion of the Music Director.

Winds, Brass, and Percussion:

Each section will have a Principal appointed at the Music Director's discretion. Members of each section will be given part assignments for each work on a performance by the Principal in consultation with the Music Director.

Strings:

The Music Director in consultation with the concertmaster and the string principals will decide seating assignments. Seating assignments may change from concert to concert.

Code of Conduct

The conduct of any member of the PSO may have consequences for the reputation both of the PSO and of the music profession more widely. All members must therefore maintain the highest standards of professional conduct and personal integrity and are expected to treat each other with collegial respect and consideration. All PSO members are expected to comport themselves respectfully and responsibly in all public interactions when representing the orchestra.

This Code of Conduct sets out the standards that we expect PSO members to maintain.

Please review the full [Code of Conduct](#). **Failure to comply with the provisions set out in this Code of Conduct could lead to participation in the orchestra being suspended or terminated.**

Policy on Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment

For purposes of this policy, “PSO members” refers to independent contractors, community players, full-time and part-time staff, and volunteers who work with the PSO.

This policy applies to all members and to all bullying and harassing with a connection to work associated with the PSO, even where the conduct takes place outside of the PSO’s physical premises, such as in a performance venue not owned by the PSO, in a virtual workspace, in electronic or written communications, during PSO-related travel, or at social functions related to the PSO.

It is the responsibility of all PSO members to ensure that their interactions with other members of the orchestra, guest musicians and audience members are safe, healthy and respectful, and that they model attitudes and behaviors that support the mission of the organization. All PSO members have a duty to maintain healthy relationships and appropriate personal boundaries. Each person should treat one another with respect and dignity.

Please review the full Policy on [Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment](#). **Failure to comply with this policy may result in suspension or termination from the orchestra.**

Orchestra Committee

The Orchestra Committee serves as the primary liaison between PSO musicians and the Board of Directors. The committee is chaired by Eric Salas (muzikman7@gmail.com).

In addition to representing musician concerns and sharing them with the Board, the Orchestra Committee also helps foster community within the PSO by organizing social events.

These include the season-opening pizza party, the annual members' meeting each March, and an end-of-season gathering. Additional social opportunities may be planned throughout the year as time and budget allow.

If you're interested in joining the Orchestra Committee or learning more, please reach out to Eric.

Musician's Concerns

Musicians are encouraged to bring general concerns to the Orchestra Committee. The Committee will review these matters and share their recommendations with the Music Director and the Board. Both the Music Director and the Board are committed to giving thoughtful consideration to all recommendations. Members also retain the right to speak directly with the Music Director whenever he is available.

Concerns Related to Discrimination, Harassment, or Bullying

Matters involving discrimination, harassment, or bullying should be reported promptly. You may bring these concerns to your section principal or the Musician Coordinator, or to any section principal, board member, or staff person with whom you feel comfortable.

Membership Review

The Music Director and the Musician Coordinator are responsible for reviewing the season's performance work product and the roster of musicians at the end of each season. Such a review will naturally include performance level, commitment, and overall contribution to the organization. The Music Director has the discretion to consult with Principals and the

Orchestra Committee. If the membership review identifies concerns about an individual musician, the Music Director and Musician Coordinator, in conjunction with the Principal, will create a good faith plan to address said concerns on an individual basis. If, and only if, the guidance plan has been exhausted AND the performance concerns remain will recommendation for dismissal be considered.

The decision to dismiss would be made by the Music Director, in consultation with the Musician Coordinator, the respective Principal and the Chair of the Orchestra Committee.

Opportunities for Growth or Feedback

Musicians are encouraged to seek feedback to support their growth and development. You may request input on your performance from your Principal or the Music Director at any time. Musicians may also request a 30-minute clinic once per year, scheduled at a mutually convenient time, where you may perform in person for a combination of the Music Director, Musician Coordinator, and/or your Principal. You are also welcome to submit an audition recording for feedback.

Please note that in both cases, feedback is provided solely as a professional development resource and will not affect your standing in the orchestra. To take advantage of these opportunities, contact your Principal, the Musician Coordinator, or the Music Director.

Joining The PSO

Musicians auditioning for a Principal vacancy must audition in person.

All other musicians wishing to join the PSO at any level should submit a video to info@portsmouthsymphony.org.

Proficiency and audition requirements are listed on the PSO website and will be updated periodically at the discretion of the Music Director. Auditions will be reviewed by the Music Director and the relevant Principal of the PSO. Players of all levels are invited and welcome to submit a video.

Players accepted into the orchestra will undergo a year probationary period before being considered a full member of the orchestra.

Proficiency requirements for entrance auditions

Current members of the orchestra will not have to re-audition.

Please check the website for updates.

All Winds: 2 octaves scales @metronome marking 110, standard keys up to 4 flats and sharps. 2 contrasting solo pieces, from the standard repertoire. Orchestral excerpts as listed on the PSO website. Sight reading.

Strings (violins, violas, celli): 3 octave scales @ metronome marking 110, standard keys up to 4 flats and sharps, 2 contrasting solo pieces, from the standard repertoire: one piece by J. S. Bach, one free choice. Orchestral excerpts as listed on the PSO website. Sight reading.

Double Bass: 2 octaves scales @metronome marking 110, standard keys up to 4 flats and sharps. 2 contrasting solo pieces, from the standard repertoire. Orchestral excerpts as listed on the PSO website. Sight reading.

Percussion: Orchestral excerpts as listed on the PSO website. Sight reading.

Music

The Librarian will make all public domain music available for download from the PSO or other web site. All marked parts are to be uploaded by the Orchestra Librarian and made available to musicians 4 weeks prior to the first scheduled rehearsal. It is each musician's responsibility to print their part before the first rehearsal. The Librarian will provide a printed part for any musician who specifically requests it at least 3 days before a rehearsal.

For music that is purchased or rented, parts will be distributed by the Librarian. Musicians should return their music immediately after each performance. A central location for return of music will be designated at the performance venue. Members who do not return music immediately after the performance will be responsible for all consequential fees assessed to the PSO by the music publisher. In the rare event that music must be returned by mail to the Librarian, a service that includes tracking numbers must be used.

Rehearsal

Details on rehearsal times, locations, and directions are always available on the PSO website, and musicians are responsible for checking regularly to stay up to date.

In general, rehearsals are held on Monday evenings from 6:30–9:00 PM at Portsmouth High School. During concert weeks, an additional mid-week rehearsal (Wednesday or Thursday) is typically scheduled, along with a Saturday dress rehearsal. On occasion, alternative rehearsal locations may be used if Portsmouth High School is unavailable.

The PSO does not currently have staff dedicated to chair setup or teardown. While members are not expected to set up chairs, any assistance is appreciated. All musicians are expected to return their own chair at the end of rehearsal, if physically able.

Punctuality is essential: members are expected to be warmed up, seated, tuned, and ready to play at the published start time. Late arrivals disrupt the ensemble and delay rehearsal progress. Out of respect for fellow musicians, please silence all electronic devices during rehearsals.

Sectionals

At the Principal's discretion, they may schedule voluntary sectionals for each section. Should a sectional be held, the Principal should contact all players in the section and do their best to find a time that is convenient for the majority of the players. A short sectional may be scheduled or requested during rehearsal break, however please note that breaks are for a musician's wellbeing.

A brief summary will be emailed to the section within 3 days so all players are informed.

Performances

PSO's typical season includes performances in November, December, March, and June with occasional educational and summer performances. Members are asked to keep these performance times of the year as free from other obligations as possible so that PSO can successfully assemble a solid performance series. The Board of Directors will make every effort to give as much advance notice as possible about specific performance dates. Most

performances are held on weekends, either in the late afternoon or evening. All potential performance dates are brought before the board for discussion, and are typically finalized by June 1st for the following season.

Chamber Music

The PSO offers chamber performances throughout the calendar year. Proposals should be submitted to the Outreach Director, Aubrie Dionne, aubrie.dionne@portsmouthsymphony.org by June 1 and are accepted on a first-come, first served basis contingent on funding availability.

To view eligibility and programming requirements, please view our [Chamber Music Series Policy](#).

Music for Hire

Outside organizations may contact the PSO to hire musicians for events. If you are interested in being considered for gigs through the PSO, please contact the Outreach Director, Aubrie Dionne, aubrie.dionne@portsmouthsymphony.org. [Music for Hire Policy](#)

Performance Dress

The impression that is made on an audience is influenced by many factors other than the collective musical performance abilities of the orchestra. A polished, engaged, professional appearance onstage communicates to the audience our high regard for the music to be

performed. The Music Director will establish particular dress requirements each season, based on the circumstances of each performance.

Inclement Weather Policy

Understandably, rehearsals must be held whenever possible in spite of inclement weather. If rehearsal must be cancelled, notice will be sent to all members via email by 3:00 PM whenever possible, as well as updated on the schedule on the PSO website. If there is uncertainty whether or not a rehearsal will take place, please call the office (603) 686-8133. Musician commitment during challenging weather is important to the success of each concert cycle. If rehearsal is being held, but local conditions make it impossible for you to travel safely, please notify the Membership Coordinator as you would in any absence.

Performances may be cancelled due to weather. Should this happen, every effort will be made to notify all members at least three hours prior to performance time by email, telephone, and the PSO website.

IF NO WORD IS RECEIVED, MEMBERS SHOULD ASSUME THE PERFORMANCE WILL BE HELD. Outdoor performances usually have identified an alternate performance location in the event of inclement weather.

Musician Quick Guide: Who to Contact?

We want to make it easy for you to know who to reach out to when you have a question or need support. Here's a quick reference:

[Artistic & Repertoire](#)

[Personnel & Scheduling](#)

[Operations, Logistics, Administrative, Marketing & Development](#)

Artistic & Repertoire

Music Director (Conductor)

→ Questions about repertoire, interpretation, or artistic direction. Only Principals should contact the Music Director outside of rehearsal.

Your Principal! – *The Musician Coordinator will share this information with you.*

→ Questions about repertoire, divisi/bowings, interpretation, or artistic direction. They will respond within three (3) days.

Personnel & Scheduling

Musician Coordinator

→ Absences, requesting subs, rehearsal & concert attendance, seating assignments, section conflict, or auditions.

Librarian

→ Music distribution, markings, replacements, or lost parts.

Outreach Director

→ Chamber music proposals, music for hire requests, Young Artist Competition questions, or school visits.

Orchestra Committee

→ General concerns, section conflict, orchestra (non-concert) events, and board liaison.

Operations, Logistics, Administrative, Marketing & Development

General Manager

→ Orchestra policies, contracts, backstage logistics, organizational questions, general concerns or if you're unsure who to ask.

→ Stage setup, chairs, stands, percussion needs, backstage questions during rehearsals/concerts.

→ Payment questions, W-9s, updating tax or financial information, reimbursements.

→ Media inquiries, PSO events, donor or sponsor engagement.

Board President

→ All concerns that cannot be resolved by speaking with other members of staff.